

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand here today as the Democratic cochair of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues, being the first cochair of this millennium, and happy to share this role with my friend and colleague, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT).

We will be submitting an education appropriation to address the role of education and our children.

Mr. Speaker, we are here today to celebrate March as Women's History Month and to highlight the extraordinary achievements of all women throughout our history, while recognizing the equally significant obstacles they have had to overcome along the road to success.

Women's History Month has progressed from Women's History Week, established in 1978, to coincide with International Women's Day, which we will celebrate tomorrow, March 8th.

It is during this time that we acknowledge American women of all cultures, classes and ethnic backgrounds who have served as leaders in the forefront of every major progressive social change movement, not only to secure their own rights to equal opportunity, but also in the abolitionist movement, the emancipation movement, the industrial labor movement, the civil rights movement, and other movements to create a more fair and just civil society for all.

Women have played, and continue to play, a critical economic, cultural and social role in every sphere of our Nation's life by constituting a significant portion of the labor workforce working in and out of the home.

One of the most significant roles of women is that of mother, bearing children, nurturing and protecting their children.

In an effort to provide for the well-being of her children, a mother takes charge of all health and educational needs critical to the child's development. Thus tonight we will focus on women and education.

As a mother and grandmother, I am well aware of the importance of a quality education in the lives of young people and know that next to mother a teacher is probably one of the most influential persons in a child's life.

As a former educator and the only Member of Congress to serve on the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, I have been committed to promoting quality teachers in our Nation's public schools.

Tonight I would like to discuss the issues of teacher recruitment, retention and professional development.

Mr. Speaker, it is widely recognized that investments in teacher knowledge are among the most productive means of increasing student learning. Despite our gains, much work still needs to be done. We need to ensure that all of this Nation's children are taught by well-prepared and well-qualified teachers who have access to ongoing professional development and lifelong learning opportunities.

The creation of more vigorous and rigorous professional standards for teachers is one methodology to address teacher preparedness. These standards ensure that teachers will know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to children; that they will understand how children learn and what to do when they are having difficulty; and that they will be able to use effective teaching methodology for those who are learning easily, as well as for those who have special needs.

While new teaching standards may hold great possibilities for raising the quality of teacher preparation, these advances will have little impact on the Nation's most vulnerable students if school districts continue to hire teachers who are emergency credentialed and who are assigned to teach outside of their field of expertise.

According to the Journal of Teacher Education, students learn significantly less from teachers who are not prepared in their teaching area. Fields like mathematics, physical science, special education, and bilingual education are suffering from a shortage of teachers across different regions of this country.

These shortages occur in part because some States prepare relatively few teachers but have rapidly growing student enrollment. In my State of California, enrollments are projected to increase by more than 20 percent in that State by the year 2007.

In order to achieve the educational goals and success we hold for all of our children, we must develop strategies that do not trade off student learning for the hiring of unqualified teachers. In addition, we must be willing to provide qualified teachers, especially in the urban areas, with professional salaries and much needed training and services.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to celebrate this month as Women's History Month.

We also need to create high quality mentor programs for beginning teachers and expand teacher education programs in high need fields so that individuals wishing to teach math, science and special education can obtain the training necessary to accomplish their goals. I am committed to ensuring that America's teachers are well trained, and well compensated. What goes on in classrooms between teachers and students may be the core of education, but it is profoundly shaped by the policies we propose and pass in Congress. We must support the work of teachers

and school administrators and work together to strengthen America's educational system. It is my hope that together, we can develop innovative methods to ensure that there is a competent, caring, and qualified teacher for every child in the United States of America. Women across America let's celebrate this month and showcase the accomplishments of women.

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RECOGNIZING FIVE CITIZENS FROM MARYLAND FOR THEIR FINE SERVICE TO OUR NATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CANTOR). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCREST) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GILCREST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call my colleagues' attention to the fine service to our Nation by five citizens from my Maryland Congressional district: Mr. John Williams of Elkton, Mr. Richard Noennich of Elkton, Mr. William Jeanes of Earleville, Mr. Donald H. Burton of Chesapeake City, and Mr. Emmett Duke of Chestertown.

Very often we go on with our busy lives and forget that every day our government is making decisions and plans that will affect our health, our lives and our future. Every day so many of us take for granted that someone else will take up the causes for which we care and serve as the watchdog over our Federal institutions. Often we are too busy to get involved and our government moves ahead without critical oversight from the people, leaving accountability to be sacrificed on the altar of convenience.

More than 4 years ago our government, emboldened by the neglect of its elected leaders, was determined to move forward on a public works project in Maryland to deepen the Chesapeake and Delaware canal that connected the Delaware River to the Chesapeake Bay. This particular project was both a disservice to the taxpayers and a sin to our fragile Chesapeake Bay. A proposal to spend over \$100 million on this wasteful and unnecessary project was never challenged. Yet five men from opposite corners of the community and separate walks of life met by chance and formed an alliance in the name of injecting honesty and integrity into an intimidating government review process. Led by the guiding principle of truth and a commitment to public service, these patriots faced the air of entrenched special interest with little outside support and ultimately triumphed in their efforts.

After enduring years of ridicule by editorial writers, being stonewalled by government bureaucrats and marginalized by many of their own elected officials, they were recently vindicated in their work by the rightful collapse of the project when the

Corps of Engineers finally recognized that they were correct in their assumptions.

Throughout the entire experience, these five men did not forget that one thing that makes America so strong, that democracy only works when citizens stay involved. These five citizens committed thousands of hours and thousands of dollars to making sure that our institutions of government stay committed to the principles of democracy, that our government of the people, and by the people remain truly for the people. Long after many of us would have withdrawn in frustration and moved on, they never lost their sense of optimism about our system of government.

Mr. Speaker, I commend them for this optimism. I commend their perseverance, and I commend the example they set for our children and grandchildren.

In his recent inaugural address, our new President reminded us sometimes in life we are called to do great things, but every day we are called to do small things with great love. These five patriots showed that in the small things they did every day and the great accomplishment that resulted, they showed great love for their community and our country.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking John Williams, Richard Noennich, Bill Jeanes, Don Burton and Emmett Duke for their service to our nation.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said in his essay more than a hundred years ago, *Self-reliance*, "There is no peace without the triumph of principles." These men epitomize that statement.

CLOSE THE GUN SHOW LOOPHOLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Congress was awake today when there was another shooting, making two shootings in a week, yesterday California at a public school, two dead, 13 injured; today a Catholic school. It appears that there is one injury.

I am not sure if it takes these shootings to get congressional attention. I do give considerable credit to Senator MCCAIN and Senator LIEBERMAN who have been trying to close the gun gap since this Congress began, that is the gap that we left open at the end of the 106th Congress in spite of Colombine.

The Million Moms are still organizing at the grass roots. Members should be wary of letting another year go by of shootings and no action. I will have a Mother's Day resolution on the floor and I challenge the Congress to close the loophole before that resolution and before Mother's Day. We have

come so very close and we must ask ourselves what advantage is it to us and our constituents to give an advantage to gun shows over licensed dealers in our district? Why should licensed dealers not get the respect, they who pay taxes, over gun shows who go without the same regulations; and why oppose closing the loophole when 90 percent would pass instantly. This is a question of congressional will.

I do not pretend that this is any panacea any more than the Brady Bill was, but everybody now knows what a considerable difference the Brady Bill made. It is some important difference that closing the loophole would make, and surely today we would recognize that with all of the rhetoric about protecting our children. This much we can do. We can close that loophole.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to lay the second amendment argument to rest once and more all. The Constitution does not bar reasonable regulation of gun ownership. How do I know that? In the District of Columbia and all over the United States, there are laws that forbid handguns altogether. Those laws were challenged decades ago and found constitutional. Why in the face of the fact that cities and localities regularly regulate guns do we hear constitutional arguments against closing the loophole. We need a national law. It is not good enough to have a law in New York and Atlanta and the District of Columbia because guns travel by interstate commerce like people, they travel on people and they travel in cars.

We must not wait for the next shooting because we know it will come, and it may even come if we close the loophole. But to the extent that we save the life of one child, and there are two dead tonight, by a law that closes the gun show loophole, we shall have done what was necessary for Members of Congress to do.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this body to act now, act before Mother's Day.

36-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF MARCH ACROSS EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues see on the floor of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) and the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. HILLIARD).

Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening on a day of a very special and heroic event. In fact, I am somewhat overwhelmed because this has been a particularly difficult day. It caused me to see the importance of those many souls on March 7, 1965 who took the heroic step to walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama.

It was heroic because they were marching into danger unforeseen. The

simple request was to allow people to vote, to be able to capture the essence of the Constitution; and in the Declaration of Independence we all are created equal. We had the good fortune this weekend, as I have done for the past 3 years, to join John Lewis, one of those along with Hosea Williams and Bernard Lafayette and many, many others on that fateful day, March 7, 1965 to begin that walk of no return.

We commemorated it, by our walk, and we walked tall. We saw media, we had throngs, and we were not beaten. Those 36 years ago, however, those individuals who were brave enough to do it, were putting their life on the line. They were beaten, beaten to unconsciousness. They were bloodied, but they were unbowed.

After what we have gone through in this last election year, this past weekend was even more riveting and more emotional. It showed me even more the sacrifice made for those of us who now stand here today.

The gentleman from Alabama (Mr. HILLIARD) returned home after being educated at Morehouse and finishing his law degree to serve his community. I pay tribute to him because he lived that life and fought that fight. We must never forget March 7, 1965.

We must never forget that bloody Sunday, we must never forget the courage of those who came back, Dr. Martin Luther King came back on, I believe, March 21, and we should commit ourselves, Republicans and Democrats alike, never to allow the fundamental right to vote to be diminished. That is why I propose a national holiday for all Americans to vote in Presidential years and the Secure Democracy Act that will establish the kind of systems that will allow all Americans to vote.

I believe this is extremely important as we acknowledge as well this month the celebration of women in America's history. So many women who shared their life with the civil rights movement, so many women who are our first teachers, so many women who braved obstacles to be able to serve their country in the United States military. Yet we still have many miles to travel.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of those who wish to vote, on behalf of women, and as I close, on behalf of our children, for I join my previous colleague, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) to say how many more times will we apologize to the parents of dead children.

We must in fact take the bravery of men and women who went forward in the civil rights movement and women who paved the way for those of us who stand here to pass real gun safety legislation, to hold adults accountable, to find ways to heal the broken hearts of children who find no other way to exhibit their anger than to take a 22 rifle and shoot 30 rounds of ammunition out of the 40 that the child secured.